

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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----- 127675

P R 121548Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2853

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1996

EXDIS

PASS DIA

PASS TO SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, LE, XF

SUBJ: CAIRO ARAB LEAGUE DEFENSE COUNCIL MEETING

REF: BEIRUT 1826

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA DELIGHTED WITH CAIRO ARAB LEAGUE DEFENSE MINISTERS MEETING IN THAT LEBANON WAS ABLE DODGE ACCEPTING ARAB MILITARY PERSONNEL OR MASSIVE ARAB MILITARY ASSISTANCE. ALSO WAS ABLE TO FINESSE ENTIRE QUESTION OF PLO IN THE LEBANON EXCEPT GENERAL ADMONITION TO PLO TO CURTAIL TERRORISM FROM LEBANON INTO ISRAEL. END SUMMARY.

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2. AS RECIPIENTS UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE, THERE HAS BEEN A GREEAT DEAL OF SPECULATION IN LEBANESE AND OTHER PRESS RE RESULTS CAIRO MEETING FEB 5-7. LAST EVENING I HAD 40 MINUTE PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA, WHO RETURNED LATE FEB 8 FROM CAIRO. TAQLA SAID HE WAS EXTREMELY PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE CAIRO MEETING WHICH CAME OUT AS HE HAD PLANNED. THE MEETING'S ATMOSPHERICS WERE CORDIAL BUT BUSINESSLIKE AND THERE WAS LITTLE OR NO ACRIMONY. THE ARABS WERE GENEROUS IN THEIR OFFERS BUT DID NOT APPEAR TO BE RESENTFUL WHEN THE LEBANESE TURNED DOWN OFFERS OF PERSONNEL AND RELATIVELY SOPHISTICATED MILITARY EQUIPMENT. NO REPEAT NO FINANCIAL FIGURE WAS REACHED AS TO ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON, BUT THE CONFERENCE CONCLUDED THAT ARAB STATES THAT COULD WOULD SUPPLY LEBANESE ARMY WITH SOME ARTILLERY AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS. TAQLA WAS VAGUE AS TO PRECISELY WHAT WAS INVOLVED, BUT STATED THE "SOLDIERS HAD EXCHANGED LISTS" AND THE LEBANESE ARMY WAS RELATIVELY SATSIFIED AS TO WHAT IT WOULD GET. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PURCHASES ABROAD, TAQLA SAID, WAS PROMISED IF ARAB STATES DID NOT HAVE THE REQUIRED WEAPONRY IN THE ARSENALS.

3. ASSISTANCE FOR SOUTHERN LEBANON WAS OFFERED BUT WAS, ACCORDING TO TAQLA, COURTEOUSLY REJECTED AS LEBANESE RECONSTRUCTION WAS A LEBANESE RESPONSIBLITY. AT A MEETING PRIOR TO THE CONFERENCE WITH THE SAUDI REPS, THE LATTER OFFERED LARGE SUMS FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF KAFR SHUBA AND OTHER VILLAGES, CITING THE FACT THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD THE GOL HAD ACCEPTED ONE MILLION DOLLARS FROM PRESIDENT ASAD. TAQLA RESPONDED THAT THE MILLION DOLLARS WAS A PERSONAL CHARITABLE OFFERING BY PRESIDENT ASAD AND IF KING FEISAL OR OTHER SAUDIS DESIRED TO MAKE A SIMILAR CHARITABLE OFFER, IT WOULD BE GRACIOUSLY RECEIVED.

4. I ASKED TAQLA WHERE HE STOOD WITH THE SAUDI (EMBTEL 1712 NOTAL) POINTING OUT I HAD HEARD A SERIOUS CONTRETEMPS HAD ARISEN OVER LEBANESE PRESS TREATMENT OF KING FEISAL. TAQLA SAID THIS WAS INDEED THE CASE AND IT WAS ONE OF THE SECRET

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FIRST THINGS HE HAD TO STRAIGHTEN OUT, BUT HE WAS RELIEVED TO NOTETHAT NONE OF THE COUTRETEMPS WAS REFLECTED IN THE ATTITUDE OF THE SAUDI REPS (I BELIEVE ACTING MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE) IN CAIRO. THESE MEN HAD BEEN MOST COOPERATIVE AND HELPFUL ON ALL OCCASIONS.

5. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, TAQLA SAID THE ONLY SERIOUS

PROBLEM HE REALLY HAD TO HANDLE IN CAIRO WAS A LIBYAN OFFER TO FINANCE AND TO HELP IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SERIES OF FORTIFIED VILLAGES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. THESE KIBBUTS-LIKE MILITARY STRONGHOLDS WOULD, ACCORDING TO THE LIBYANS, OPPOSE FURTHER ISRAELI INCURSIONS AND WOULD CONSTITUTE POSITIONS FROM WHENCE THE FEDAYEEN MIGHT OPERATE. TAQLA RESPONDED THAT HE DID NOT SHARE ALL THE LIBYAN VIEWS ON THIS QUESTION AND THAT AS IT WAS A LEBANESE DECISION, HE WOULD STUDY THE MATTER UPON HIS RETURN TO BEIRUT. THE EXCHANGE WITH THE LIBYAN HEATED UP A BIT AND EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMI WAS ABOUT TO MAKE A HELPFUL INTERVENTION WHEN TAQLA WAS ABLE TO CUT OFF FUTHER DEBATE.

6. TAQLA INDICATED THAT HE WAS PARTICULARLY HAPPY THAT HE WAS ABLE TO AVOID ANY DISCUSSION OF THE

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EXDIS

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PLO AT THE CAIRO MEETING. UNLIKE THE MEETING IN JULY 1974 WHEN THERE HAD BEEN A GOOD DEAL OF DISCUSSION OF THE ARAB STATES SUPPLYING WEAPONRY TO THE PLO, THIS SUBJECT WAS NEVER BROACHED. EXCEPT AS MENTIONED ABOVE, TAQLA SAID THE ONLY REFERENCE TO THE PLO WAS A BROAD INFORMAL CONSENSUS THAT THE MOST HELPFUL THING FO THE LEBANON WOULD BE A CURTAILMENT OF FEDAYEEN RAIDS FROM LEBANON INTO ISRAEL. THIS VIEW WAS NOT FORMALIZED BUT, ACCORDING TO TAQLA, CAME THROUGH LOUD AND CLEAR.

7. TAQLA ALSO WAS DELIGHTED WITH THE ATTITUDE OF HIS ARAB COLLEAGUES. THE SYRIANS, HE SAID, WERE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL, NOT ONLY IN THE DISCUSSIONS

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BUT ALSO IN CONTROLLING ZUHAYR MUHSIN, WHO WAS ONE OF THE MORE TROUBLESOME ELEMENTS IN THE JULY 1974 MEETING. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, HE HAD LITTLE TO SAY AND IT WAS OBVIOUS HIS SYRIAN MASTERS HAD TOLD HIM TO BEHAVE HIMSELF. TAQLA ATTRIBUTED THE SYRIAN ATTITUDE TO HIS VISIT TO DAMASCUS AND HIS TALKS WITH KHADDAM LATE LAST MONTH.

8. I PRESSED TAQLA AS TO THE CASH HE HAD OBTAINED FROM HIS ARAB FRIENDS. HE RETERATED WHAT HE HAD SAID ABOVE (PARA 2) AND THAT THERE WERE NO REPEAT NO AMOUNT SPECIFIED, ALTHOUGH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF WEALTHY STATES REPEATEDLY TOOK THE POSITION THAT MONEY WAS AVAILABLE IF REQUIRED. TAQLA WILL BE PRESENTING TO THE CABINET TODAY A REPORT ON THE CAIRO MEETING AND TOMORROW WILL BE APPEARING BEFORE PARLIAMENT. WHILE THERE IS CONSIDERABLE LOCAL POLITICAL PRESSURE FOR A COMPLETE PUBLIC REPORT OF THE CAIRO MEETING, TAQLA IMPLIED HE WILL BE ABLE TO AVOID THIS AND SAID THAT HE WAS RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC THAT FOR THE TIME BEING HE COULD SATISFY LOCAL POLITICAL APPETITES FOR MORE PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSION ON THE MILITARY SITUATION IN THE SOUTH. I PERSONALLY BELIEVE THIS MIGHT BE DIFFICULT.

9. TAQLA SUMMARIZED OUR DISCUSSION, POINTING OUT THAT THE CAIRO MEETING HAD REALLY NOT REPEAT NOT CHANGED THE LOCAL LEBANESE MILITARY SITUATION. THE WEAPONS THAT THE ARMY IS SEEKING ARE PURELY DEFENSIVE

AND HE DOUBTS THAT THEY WILL BE ARRIVING HERE FOR SOME TIME. IN CONCLUDING, HE REQUESTED THAT WE BRING FOREGOING TO THE ATTENTION OF THE GOI AND, IN SO DOING, TRY TO CONVINCE THE GOI THAT IT ABSTAIN FROM FURTHER MILITARY ACTIONS IN THE SOUTHERN LEBANON. I TOLD THE MINISTER I WOULD OF COURSE REPORT HIS VIEWS TO THE DEPARTMENT AND THE SECRETARY BUT COULD GIVE HIM NO INDICATION AS TO WHAT ACTION WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO TAKE.

GODLEY

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